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V I E W

OF

Agricultural Oppressions: &c.



PRICE TWO SHILLINGS.



OF

Agricultural Operations: &c.

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VIEW  
OF  
Agricultural Oppressions:  
AND OF  
*THEIR EFFECTS UPON SOCIETY.*

BY THOMAS MARSTERS, JUNIOR.

SECOND EDITION.



And may be had of the Bookfellers in Lynn.  
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GREGORY, Cambridge; and GEDGE, Bury.

1798.

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Agricultural Opinions:

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And printed at the British Museum.  
For the purpose of forming a permanent Library of  
Agriculture, Commerce and General History.

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## PREFACE.

SUCH is the multiplicity of books,  
that it is very difficult to find a sub-  
ject, or even an idea, which has not  
been previously touched upon.---

Therefore, in submitting this pamph-  
let to the public, it is far from my  
intention to claim originality; because  
I have observed (and I mention it  
with pleasure) that several treatises  
have before been published upon the  
same subject.

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My motive, then, in writing this work, has been a desire of endeavouring to *increase* the publicity, and the conviction, of the evil here described. For undoubtedly the greater the quantity of evidence is against an injurious custom, the greater will be the probability of its being generally exploded. And I have remarked, that, notwithstanding what has been already advanced, by able writers, against the perversion of the agricultural system, still the people of this nation appear not to be sufficiently conscious of its ruinous tendency.

Certainly the desire of fame (with which I must confess myself sometimes actuated) has not had much  
share

share in impelling me to this undertaking; since many subjects presented themselves, which, in my opinion, promised a much readier road to popularity. But, for a considerable time, I have viewed, with much concern, the calamitous effects arising from unjust and impolitic agricultural institutions; and I could not rest satisfied, 'till, by publicly censuring these institutions, I had done my endeavours to have them redressed.

I have therefore taken the opportunity which the intervals of leisure have afforded me, to commit my thoughts upon this subject to paper; in doing which I have been totally unbiassed by any motive of private interest.

As to the execution of my design, it is probable that much may be found to censure in that respect; my periods for writing being such as are rather calculated for short essays and sketches, than for any work of a more extensive nature; however, I have bestowed as much pains upon this treatise, as the time which could be allotted to its composition would possibly admit of.

I had no one to consult in the undertaking, and therefore I stand alone; submitting this production, not to the animadversions of private criticism, but to the tribunal of public decision.

If

If any of my brother farmers choose to take offence at what I have advanced in this pamphlet, I can only say—that I wish not to be under their displeasure—that I have composed this work entirely with a view of vindicating the rights of society, and if I have erred, it remains for those who reject my conclusions, to show some reason for adopting a contrary way of thinking. But should there be any who are offended because I have attempted publicly to expose injustice and oppression, I cannot think the good opinion of such people worth cultivating, and consequently shall feel no regret at experiencing their ungenerous censure.



Should my endeavours throw the smallest ray of light upon the subject here investigated, or should one convert be made to my opinion, (which I hope is founded in truth and equity) I shall heartily congratulate myself with having employed my periods of leisure to a purpose somewhat useful as well as self-satisfactory.

*Thomas Marsters, Junior.*



A

# VIEW

OF

## *Agricultural Oppressions: &c.*

### CHAPTER I.

#### PREVIOUS REMARKS.

**SOCIETY** is established upon the basis of necessity and inclination. Government originates in the vices of society, and ought always to counteract evil.

Were society what it ought to be, there would be no need of government; since the latter is only instituted to controul the vices of the former.

Men, by their nature and composition, are every way disposed for society. Impelled by their mutual wants and affections, they eagerly associate, in order to procure, by reciprocation, those pleasures and advantages, which are not to be found in a state of solitary exclusion.

It follows then, as a concomitant principle, (and it is required by the reciprocal claims of civilized communities) that every individual, who experiences society's benefits, should carefully respect the interests of society.

But this obligation is too generally violated, and the public welfare is relentlessly trampled on, in the eager pursuit of private emolument. Monopolies grow up, whose baneful influence deform the fair face of social amity, consigning the multitude to the most abject depression, that a few may triumph in splendid luxuriance; and what is worse, not only society, but government itself, too frequently acts in opposition to its duty—organizing and encouraging those institutions, which it ought most carefully to restrain.

Where



Where this is the case, society is deprived of its advantages, its cement is relaxed, and numerous disorders will inevitably follow.

My present purpose is, to notice that vast principle of landed accumulation, which now so alarmingly prevails in this country; a principle from whence mischiefs incalculable arise, diffusing themselves into such a variety of complex channels, that society is overwhelmed with the inauspicious influence; whilst the imagination, in endeavouring to trace and illustrate every evil consequence, is bewildered and lost in the devious pursuit.

Every monopoly has an evil tendency, but the monopoly of land is particularly injurious; for land being the source of all our supplies, to monopolize that must affect the whole.

The cultivation of the earth produced the cultivation of the human mind. Arts and sciences had their origin in agriculture. Hence man has become a more exalted being, and the face of the  
universe

universe has been changed. Yet, notwithstanding this advancement of the human intellect, still it may be doubted, whether (owing to the influence of pernicious institutions) the condition of the multitude be not, at this time, as wretched in *polished society*, as in the rudest state of uncultivated nature. At least it is certain, that whilst to some cultivation has diffused its advantages, to others it has brought a preponderance of woe.

To consider, therefore, the causes and the consequences of this disproportionate operation, shall be the object of the following pages.





## CHAPTER II.

### ON THE INFLUENCE OF CERTAIN LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS UPON AGRICULTURE.

BEFORE I proceed to point out the mischievous effects of the present agricultural system, it may not be amiss to trace the evil to its source, and to examine those laws and institutions, which have an oppressive influence upon agriculture, and from which, in a great measure, landed monopoly has been derived.

In this examination, the first evil which presents itself, is the unnatural law of primogeniture,

Amongst the rude warlike tribes of remote antiquity, the possession of land was generally decided by the sword. The conqueror usurped  
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the soil, and all who resided on it were his subjects and vassals. In war he was their leader, and their governor in peace. But in those turbulent times, the proprietors of neighbouring estates being frequently at war with each other, it was thought fit that an estate, upon the decease of its original owner, should not be weakened by division, but that it should descend whole and entire to one; in order the better to secure it against those incursions and oppressions, to which it was always subject from its hostile neighbours. In this case, the eldest son of every landed proprietor was the person to whom the superiority was given. He received the whole estate, and all the younger branches of the family were excluded. Hence in Britain, the origin of the feudal system, and the establishment of the law of primogeniture; a law which, in the present state of society, is most absurd, impolitic, unjust, and inhuman. It creates a family usurpation. It estranges "parents from their children, and children from their parents;" tears asunder the bonds of kindred; and often exhibits, in the same family, the haughty oppressor, and the humble dependant.

Thus

Thus it commits the most enormous outrage upon affection; relentlessly sacrificing, to the first-born son, all the helpless younger children of a family. These, by the mere accident of birth, are alienated for ever from their parents. They are born to be cherished for a while, and then devoured. "They are thrown to the cannibal for prey, and the natural parent prepares the unnatural repast."

Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, Book 3, Chap. 2, after describing the origin of primogeniture, has the following remarks. "Laws frequently continue in force long after the circumstances which first gave occasion to them, and which could alone render them reasonable, are no more. In the present state of Europe, the proprietor of a single acre of land is as perfectly secure of his possession as the proprietor of a hundred thousand. The right of primogeniture, however, still continues to be respected; and as of all institutions it is the fittest to support the pride of family distinctions, it is still likely to endure

endure for many centuries. \* In every other respect, nothing can be more contrary to the real interest of a numerous family, than a right which, in order to enrich one, beggars all the rest of the children."

Thus, by the law of primogeniture, the estates of landed proprietors having devolved from age to age, with all their enormous accumulations, upon the eldest son, the younger children of these families have been disinherited, driven from their paternal residence, and turned upon the world like orphans. Their case is peculiarly unfortunate. Born of opulent parents, brought up and educated like gentlemen, they find themselves transformed, on a sudden, to precarious indigence. Some seek employment in the church, and others become dependant upon government, which creates many unnecessary places and offices for their maintenance, so that they become a heavy burthen to the public; and it is not unfrequent to find the younger branches of noble families reduced to

\* For the sake of humanity, however, it is to be hoped that its continuance will fall far short of this prediction.

to the humble support which an alms-house affords, or cruelly shut up in a work-house or prison, there to recount their melancholy tale, and miserably bewail their hapless destiny. In short, the mischiefs of primogeniture are so many and so great, that even amongst the hereditary nobility, every affectionate parent must wish to see such a system abolished.

Another source of disadvantage to the agricultural interest, arises from the law of entail; a law which results from the principle of primogeniture. This law of entail, enables a person, by will, to consign his estate, for ever, to a certain lineal succession, and in such a way, that even none of the succeeding proprietors can ever alienate or dispose of it in any manner, under whatever circumstances. Thus the estate becomes insulated, as it were, from all other territories, and is prohibited from administering to private expedience, or public utility; and thus the freedom of the individual possessor, and the interest of the nation, are to be *for ever* restrained “by the manuscript assumed authority of the dead.”

Smith,



Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, Book 3; Chap. 2, speaking of entails, says, "They are founded upon the most absurd of all suppositions, the supposition that every successive generation of men have not an equal right to the earth, and to all that it possesses; but that the property of the present generation should be restrained and regulated according to the fancy of those who died perhaps five hundred years ago."

I shall now consider commerce, first, in its natural tendency; and secondly, with respect to the evils which its perversion is capable of producing.

Commerce is, in its nature, essentially beneficial to mankind. If permitted to be carried to its utmost extent, it would act universally, and universal good would result from its influence. In its original nature, it is favourable to peace; because each nation can obtain the produce of others by commercial intercourse, much more advantageously than by hostile violence; and this reciprocal benefit is an inducement towards cultivating universal friendship.

Commerce, therefore, in its free and natural operations, has a tendency to civilize the world, and to unite nations in the bonds of fraternity. It is the friend of humanity, and the friend of science—the promoter of industry, plenty, and happiness.

But 'though commerce, when free, has a pacific and prosperous operation, yet it often becomes, by injurious systems, an engine of war and desolating misery. For, whilst its advantages are confined to a few, these few will become immoderately wealthy; and being established and supported in their monopoly by government, to the purposes of government they will always adhere; and when the mandate for war is gone forth, they will sanction and support it by their authority and interest. Thus their interest and that of government become directly incorporated; and these commercial monopolizers are frequently not only the supporters, but the promoters of warfare—and that too upon causes the most groundless and unjust.

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Thus

Thus commerce, when perverted from its natural source, when its freedom is cramped by the embarrassing restrictions, and positive prohibitions, of monopolizing establishments, has a pernicious, a degrading tendency. For, being itself monopolized, it creates a system of monopoly in other things—giving to the few exclusive advantages, and driving the many to misery's abyss--producing, on the one hand, immoderate luxury, on the other the extreme of penury and want—and whilst creating oppressions at home, spreads fury and desolation in exotic regions.

I have thus mentioned commerce, because it appears, that its perversion has been considerably injurious to agriculture.

The law of primogeniture, and the monopoly of commerce, have produced an accumulation of landed estates; and much of the territorial property of this nation is now possessed partly by the eldest sons of the privileged orders, and partly by a few opulent traders. Commercial monopoly has  
also

also introduced, in this country, an immoderate partial luxury; and the wars which it has occasioned, have brought with them a grievous burthen of taxes. The landed proprietors, therefore, (who are divided into two classes, the frugal and the luxurious) have thought fit to devise parsimonious plans in the management of their estates, which might enable them to shake off, in part, the weight of taxation—the costs of building, &c—and, at the same time, to raise greater supplies. With these views, therefore, they have consolidated their farms—letting out, to one man, whole districts, which were formerly occupied by several persons. Hence fewer farm-houses and other buildings were required; and thus, having diminished the charges of taxes and repairs, and made an advance in the rental, the revenues of the estates became somewhat augmented.

This measure coincided with the views of the luxurious land-owners, because it enabled them to supply, with greater facility, the means of their prodigal expenditure.

Frugal country gentlemen, residing amongst their rural territories, have, unfortunately through a mistaken policy, been led to adopt this conduct, so pregnant with mischief of various descriptions.

Thus the practice has become general; the country throughout is a scene of monopoly; and thousands must bewail its ruinous consequences.

It is certainly wrong in the system of politics, that one individual should be triumphantly exalted upon the ruin and depression of another. Yet this has too often been the case in what are called *civilized* states; of which species of injustice the barbarous law of primogeniture is, amongst private families, a striking and a melancholy instance; for the nature of this law is to display the highest contrast in the degrees of society; since, where it operates, it removes the degrees of the different children in the same family to the greatest possible distance. Every one who contemplates this law, must perceive its injustice, however unwilling he may be to acknowledge it. If then, in a private family,



family, it is unjust to exalt one individual to superfluous wealth upon the ruin of the other branches of the same family, so also it is unjust in a community, to swell the wealth, the power, and the grandeur of a few, by sacrificing the interests, the comforts, and the happiness of the many.

But, in this country, unjust and erroneous institutions have limited prosperity to a contracted sphere, and diffused misery in a circle of immense extension; and, at this time, it is probable that the conduct of society is as injurious to the present plebeian orders, as the feudal tyranny established and exercised at the Norman Conquest, was to the oppressed and enslaved Anglo-Britons.

The gradations of a community should be disposed in regular proportions, leaving no perceptible chasm; but uniting all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, in one correspondent chain of sympathetic unison. Hence would those immense vacant spaces, which now extend themselves between the rich and poor, be occupied

by intermediate orders; and hence would society acquire an agreeable symmetry, and move in a uniform and just equilibrium.

At this time, the degrees of society are too far removed for general happiness. Some few individuals are exalted to a height, which almost makes them believe they are more than men; whilst the great majority of the people are bowed down to the lowest and most abject state of servility and wretchedness—to a state which debases human nature. And how is this to be remedied? Certainly not by taking away from the rich, but by preventing the mass of the people from becoming too poor. Let property be always respected; but let us endeavour to banish entirely *extreme poverty*, and its inseparable companion, *extreme wretchedness*; for it is highly to the interest of the rich, that the poor should be comfortable and happy. And undoubtedly such a state of society would be the most likely to diffuse general happiness, where, as Rousseau expresses it—“no one citizen

citizen should be found rich enough to buy another, nor any one so poor as to be obliged to sell himself."

In viewing the causes of national oppressions, it may be observed, that many of those human institutions which are the best in their original nature, become, by perversion, the most injurious. Thus commerce, for instance, though naturally fraught with so many important advantages, has hitherto been conducted in such a manner, that it may reasonably be questioned, whether it has not contributed as much to the injury, as to the benefit of mankind. Of late years, however, it is certain—that, in this nation, amidst all our boasted increase of trade, the misery of the people has been greatly augmented; and that when there was less commerce and less monopoly, the people were less oppressed and less unhappy; content and social harmony were more prevalent in our villages, and all ranks were more friendly, and more united.

"But times are alter'd ; *trade's* unfeeling train  
 Usurp the land and dispossess the swain ;  
 Along the lawn, where scatter'd hamlets 'rose,  
 Unweildy wealth, and cumb'rous pomp repose ;  
 And ev'ry want to luxury ally'd,  
 And ev'ry pang that folly pays to pride.  
 Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,  
 Those calm desires that ask'd but little room,  
 Those healthful sports that grac'd the peaceful scene,  
 Liv'd in each look, and brighten'd all the green ;  
 These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,  
 And rural mirth and manners are no more."

GOLDSMITH ;—DESERTED VILLAGE.



CHAP.

### CHAPTER III.

#### ON THE EFFECTS OF LARGE FARMS.

**T**AKING leave of the origin of large farms, I proceed to examine their most striking effects; in doing which, I shall also consider the deplorable state of the poorer classes in this country, and shall endeavour to point out the necessity of ameliorating their condition.

Many persons have imbibed an opinion, that 'tis in large farms where the land is most improved, and cultivation carried to its highest extent.

But



But 'though it must be confessed that some large farmers have given much advantage to agriculture, yet their numbers are far overbalanced by those who have injured their lands, and rendered them, in a great measure, unproductive.

If the property of the small farmer be as adequate to the extent of his business as that of the large one, (and I am persuaded it would generally be found fully in ratio) he would be quite equal to the large farmer in respect to making improvements; and in other respects, such as proper attention to his business in all its departments, and turning even the *minutiae* to considerable profit, he would have greatly the superiority; since it must be obvious to every impartial observer, that the majority of large farmers are engaged in more business than they can properly attend to. Hence in some places we behold land entirely neglected--in others, extensive districts curtailed of their produce, by superficial cultivation. At best, large farms, from the want of proper attention, are subject to abundant

dant waste; business is frequently in confusion; and the season sometimes past ere its offices are compleated.

Since my determination to write this work, I have attentively perused different treatises, expressly written with a view of vindicating and recommending large farms. However, I have been unable to find any thing in them which amounts to real argument in support of the system which they are intended to extol. For the most part, an unsubstantial fallacy pervades these writings; the reader is shuffled about from one unproved assertion to another, and is at last left either wholly in the dark, or confused and bewildered with their heterogeneous positions. The grand foundation upon which I have observed the writers of these works build their theory, is, that large farms can be carried on at a less expence, in proportion, than small ones; and that, therefore, large farmers act upon an extensive scale of improvement, by which the country is greatly benefitted.

I admit

I admit the probability that a large tract of land may be managed at a comparatively lesser expence than a small one ; but from this circumstance we are not to infer, that an immense landed monopoly is beneficial to the country. For the large farms of the present day, (numbers of which contain between a thousand and two thousand acres, and some perhaps more) are of too great a magnitude for the proper attendance of one man; consequently the neglect which some parts must, and really *do* sustain, will much more than equal the above-mentioned advantage; and notwithstanding all our boasted agricultural economy, our extensive scale of improvements, and the benefits resulting therefrom, yet, since small farms have been monopolized, it is certain, that there has been a greater scarcity, and consequent dearth of provision, and also a greater quantity of wretchedness and discontent, than before this monopoly took place. That such has been the fact, the memory of every middle aged man, will furnish indubitable testimony.

'Tis

'Tis true we sometimes find the small farmer entering upon business with an insufficiency of capital to make improvements; but it is also true, that we often find the large farmer engaging in his extensive business under the same disadvantage. And the small farmer generally increases his capital, and collects ability to make improvements, in equal ratio with the large one; whilst, at the same time, he is not rising upon the injury of others. But thousands must be driven to poverty by the monopoly which falls to the share of the large farmer; not that, perhaps, he really *wishes* to possess such a monopoly, but he has a right to seek employment as opportunity occurs, by accommodating himself to the circumstances of the times. Therefore, whilst the land-owners will consolidate their farms, the farmers are obliged to take such as they can procure. Let it then be remembered, that I blame not the farmers because landed monopoly exists; no; 'tis the *principle* of this monopoly which I am condemning, and not the persons who are obliged to become subject to it.

it. But though the farmers are by no means blameable in this instance, yet there are some parts of their conduct which appear really censurable, and of which I shall speak by and by.

So much mention having been made of the beneficial effects of large farms in a national view, I shall now give that subject a further investigation.

Selecting, as a criterion for discussion, the period of the last sixty years, it has been proved upon various accurate authorities, that, for the *first* thirty years of that period, the exports of the corn trade in England overbalanced the imports; whereas, during the *last* thirty years of the same period (within which time the consolidation of farms has become so prevalent) the case has been *vice versa*, and the quantity of corn imported by England has exceeded that which she has exported. Here then it is evident, that whilst large farms have prevailed, we have had less produce to spare than before their establishment. Yet during this latter period of inadequate produce, more land has been



been under the plough than at any former time with which we are acquainted. Consequently, by this preponderance in our imports, it must follow, that either our growth of corn has decreased of late years, ('though there has been more arable land) or that our home consumption has been greater.

If the former be the case, I should immediately infer, that large farms have occasioned the deficiency; because in them, as before observed, the land, by mal-treatment, has been caused to yield less than it would otherwise have done. (For we are not to suppose that the seasons, during the last thirty years, have been less propitious than before ! )

If, on the other hand, our home consumption has been so much greater as to occasion the difference alluded to, it remains first to account for this augmentation. Such a circumstance cannot have arisen from the increase of population, as that (if any) must have been very inconsiderable in so short a period, pregnant with wars and emigrations.

It

It must then have arisen, in some measure, from the waste and luxury which are too prevalent in large farms. It has also been partly occasioned by the great increase of horses, whence so much land is necessarily set apart for oats and other provision for their maintenance, which might otherwise be appropriated to articles of human existence. †

Taking it then in this point of view, it will still be found that large farms have produced the evil. Because in these (where the soil will admit of it) the land is generally laid under the plough, whence more horses are required, to the exclusion of cattle for grazing. Since to large farms too is owing the increase of luxury, to them we must ascribe the increase of horses for purposes of pleasure and inutility.

Thus,

† I could wish, for my own part, that it were not necessary to discourage the increase of that noble animal—the Horse; for I consider it a species of injustice to deny any thing, which is not really obnoxious from its dangerous nature, the right of existence; but yet, where the safety and welfare of Man are immediately dependant, this measure of apparent injustice must be complied with.

Thus; whether we attribute the immediate cause of our insufficiency in domestic support, either to the *decrease* of our produce, or to the *increase* of our consumption, whether we impute it to either of these circumstances separately, or to both combined, still it will be evident, that large farms are the originating principle.

Therefore, even upon the supposition that large farms were favourable to improvements, yet no benefit would result from thence to the community in general; because the luxurious waste attendant upon this species of monopoly, would always be more than proportionate to the increased produce.

But some of the apologists for landed accumulation have asserted, that small farmers, by the straitness of their circumstances, are obliged to thrash and sell their corn soon after harvest, and that, therefore, were small farms to become prevalent, the corn would be all thrashed and sent to market so early, as must occasion, before the next harvest, empty markets and a consequent

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scarcity;

scarcity; whereas, by large farms, they say, this inconvenience is prevented; because the property of the large farmer enables him to dispose of his produce at pleasure.

Now, if it should be found (as I doubt not but upon enquiry it would) that, in general, the property of the small farmer is fully as proportionate to the extent of his business as that of the large one, there can be no reason why the former should be obliged to hasten the disposal of his produce more than the latter; and the majority of small farmers who are now left in the country, of whom I have any knowledge, do not adopt this conduct;—on the contrary, I know many who keep their corn by them equally as long as the generality of large farmers, and I believe can as well afford it too!

Besides, as a further refutation of this argument, perhaps it may be found, that the approaches to famine were not more frequent when small farms were general, than they have been since large farms have borne the sway!

It

It may also be observed, that, by the monopoly of farms, the whole produce of the country is thrown into a few hands; and now, allowing the assertion to be true—namely—that the large farmers, by reason of their property, can afford to keep their corn unsold as long as they think fit—what does it prove? Why, that these farmers have an opportunity, if they are so disposed, to withhold the corn from market 'till its price becomes greatly exaggerated.

Let it be observed, however, that I by no means accuse the generality of large farmers with having, at any time, adopted this conduct;—I only state, by way of argument, the *possibility* of their doing it, admitting the truth of the representation which the apologists for landed monopoly have adduced;—by which position it will be evident, that the support of the whole community is made dependant upon the pleasure of a few individuals.

In almost every point of view we can perceive some injury arising from the monopoly of farms.



During the time which it has existed, our growth of corn has, upon an annual average, been insufficient for our own use; and it is very certain also, that, during the same time, animal provision has been much more scarce. Large farms bid fair to make a scarcity of every kind of provision.

That the accumulation of land has augmented the quantity of wretchedness in the country, is beyond a doubt; because it has added immensely to the number of the poor; and since the commencement of this accumulation, the poor-rate has enormously increased. The peaceful villager, who once supported himself and family in cheerful plenty, by occupying a small, prolific farm, is now ejected from his happy possession, and doomed, together with his family, to pine in disconsolate penury, whilst the unfeeling spirit of territorial monopoly seizes upon the once fertile spot, and renders it almost desolate by deficient cultivation.

“ Along the fields oppression’s hand is seen, †

And desolation saddens all the green:

One

† I have altered this verse a little from Goldsmith, to give the passage here quoted a more general application than it has in the original.

One only master grasps the whole domain,  
And half a tillage flints the smiling plain”.

GOLDSMITH;—DESERTED VILLAGE.

In pursuing this subject I must remark, that though it is not the fault of the farmers that landed monopoly exists, and that therefore (as before observed) no censure is imputable to them in that respect, yet the style of living adopted by many of our modern agriculturists is totally inconsistent with their profession. Not that I acquiesce, by any means, in the groveling idea, that a farmer should be a mere plodding drudge; but still I think he should avoid the other extreme, and not, by putting on too high an air of bombastic consequence, and empty affectation, become the votary of extravagance and folly. I would have the farmer a man of refinement and real intelligence; but I would not have him a luxurious reveller, nor an assuming coxcomb. Most assuredly farmers should cultivate their understandings, and store their minds with useful information, and not

let

let their ignorance be a constant theme of ridicule in society, as if *farmer* and *blockhead* were synonymous terms! A variety of instances might be adduced to prove, that agriculture and philosophy are very nearly connected; but as I know the bare mention of the word *philosophy* will be *frightful* to many of my country readers, I will not further alarm their feelings by expatiating upon the subject!

The farmer in his mode of living might allow himself many indulgencies, but he should not be ostentatiously sumptuous and profuse.

However, we may behold many of our principal farmers revelling in a perpetual routine of visiting and being visited, leaving all their business to their bailiffs and stewards, and seldom personally appearing in their fields, except when in pursuit of a hare or a partridge! Nay, we even find some of them keeping their carriage and suitable equipage!! Such persons, indeed, may be *styled* farmers, but they are certainly farmers only by *proxy*!

Now,

Now, is it reasonable to suppose, that land in the possession of such men, should be made to produce as much, in proportion, as the land occupied by the small *practical* farmer, who superintends every thing himself, with assiduity and circumspection? Or is it probable that those large farmers, living in the manner above described, can possess a judgement, either of stock or tillage, equal to what, in such an extensive occupation, must be necessarily required?

Small farmers, who attend in person to their affairs, are undoubtedly more likely to make the most of them, than the man of large business, who trusts to stewards and hirelings.

In reply, then, to the paltry jargon, so often repeated—that large farms must be kept up, for the sake of farming improvements—I ask, *who are to make these improvements?* Are they to proceed from hireling dependants, whose situation with their master is always precarious? Or are we to expect some wonderful agricultural advantages from the

*rising generation* of opulent farmers? Those young dashing, ranting, swaggering heroes, bred up to dissipation, hunting, and horse-racing! For my own part, I should as soon suspect that our barns would be turned into taverns, and our fields into fox-covers!

It is, however, but justice to acknowledge, that there are several exceptions from this character amongst the young wealthy farmers of the present day; yet I am sorry to remark, that, for the most part, it is but too applicable,

I am not contending to have *all* farms small ones—no; there might be many of considerable extent, and even several *large ones*. But the present *general* monopoly ought to be done away. There ought also to be many cottages with a few acres of land annexed to each; and the small farms should rise in due progression; in order that the industrious and careful labourer, should he have been able to save any thing from his daily earnings, might have a chance of becoming himself a small occupier,



occupier, and of rising gradually to a higher station. This would be an energetic stimulus to industry, and a promoter of general satisfaction and concord.

*But, say the advocates for landed accumulation, we are not for having small farmers, yet we would have happy and contented labourers.*—Did they reason candidly, they might perceive, that it is impossible for the latter position to be accomplished, whilst the former is acted upon. The labourer cannot be really happy and contented without some chance of advancement. To be kept drudging from day to day, from year to year, in one dull course, without being able to improve his condition—to remain for ever stationary—to see others daily raising themselves higher, whilst he merely eats, drinks, sleeps, and toils, in a sort of lethargic existence—to grow old without a sufficient provision to support the incapacity and infirmities of age—such a situation can never be happy, unless to one totally incapable of reflection, and duller “than the fat weed that roots itself in ease on *Lethe's* wharf.” †

† Shakespeare;—Hamlet.

When

When we find the favourers of landed monopoly boasting of their grand scales of cultivation, their improved systems, their refined operations, and vast abilities, we might naturally expect to see something wonderfully advantageous and happy arise from all this; at least, a rich abundance of all sorts of provision, and a flourishing, comfortable, and contented peasantry. But mark the contrast! Provisions, in general, so scarce and dear, as to be a subject of serious complaint; § and the poor shivering in rags, and pinched with hunger—subsisting chiefly upon bread alone, and scarcely a sufficiency of that! ¶ Whilst this is the case,

I will

§ At the instant, however, that I am writing this, both corn and other provisions are as cheap as they have been remembered for a long time before. But this cheapness is not owing to our own increase of produce; for there is every probability that our last year's crop of wheat is not near sufficient for the present year's consumption; and it is certain that animal food is not, at this time, more plentiful in the country, than it has been for many preceding years. The depression, then, in the price of the articles of provision, arises partly from the scarcity of money, and the consequent embarrassments of trade, and partly from a large corn importation.

¶ I am not afraid of confutation in what I here advance; for I speak not from theory, but from what I am in the habits of daily witnessing. Turn which way we will, the picture is but too visible.

I will ever exclaim—away with your boasted projects, your speculations, and improvements; and give us simple cultivation, and tranquil happiness, in preference to your refined systems, and complicated wretchedness.

I own I am a friend to *real* agricultural improvements, but not to *pretended* ones, which bring nothing but mischief in their course. It is, beyond doubt, of high importance that great advances should be made in the science of agriculture; but, in order to attain this end, we must have regulations far different from the present.

'Tis astonishing that the favourers of large farms should persist in defending their ruinous system upon a pretended plea of extensive national benefit—when this plea is every way refuted by the slightest attention to facts; so little claim has it to plausibility, and so far is it from being capable of bearing the touchstone of candid investigation,

Yet this wretched, this erroneous pretext, is the *Mount Olympus* of the sticklers for landed monopoly,

monopoly, from whence they hurl their malignant bolts against the happiness and content of the peaceful villager.

To sum up the argument in brief, it amounts to this—Every public system ought to be for the good of the majority; and if it be otherwise, it ought not to remain. Is landed monopoly, then, favourable to the multitude? No; their wretchedness and discontent in consequence of this monopoly, is an evident proof of the contrary. Well then, upon this ground might be combated and overthrown all the arguments which the defenders of large farms could possibly bring into the lists of controversy. Let them come armed with their systems of extensive operations, and all their agricultural pretensions, yet the mere evidence of this single fact would beat the whole host of champions off the field.

Do we not know and acknowledge that all monopolies are injurious? If so, then certainly the monopoly of land cannot be otherwise; on the contrary, it is the worst of all monopolies; for,  
since

since 'tis the produce of the land which supports us all, landed monopoly strikes at the very root of our existence.

Were smaller farms to become more general throughout the country, a greater quantity of corn might be produced upon fewer acres of land than at present. Of course we should have much more land to spare for the rearing of cattle; and these, together with the benefits resulting from them, would be much cheaper, which would give the poor an opportunity of procuring something to eat with their bread; and, in that case, perhaps less bread would be consumed than at present, when so large a portion of the community subsist upon no other provision.

Before I conclude this chapter, I shall just remark, that much benefit might result to the country at large, and to the poor in particular, from the inclosure of commons and waste lands, were they judiciously partitioned. These tracts, when inclosed, ought to be laid into small allotments, and distributed amongst the poor; each of whom,



whom, by cultivating with assiduity his exclusive possession, would be enabled to make more advantage to himself and the public, than when holding his share in common with the rest.

But now, instead of this proceeding, which humanity and sound policy would advise, the commons and wastes, when inclosed, are all swallowed up by the prevailing rage for landed accumulation; and are annexed either to the parks and pleasure grounds of the nobility and gentry, or to farms already too large; whilst the poor are totally deprived of their last-remaining inheritance, without receiving any equivalent in return.

“Where then, ah! where shall poverty reside,  
To ’scape the pressure of contiguous pride?  
If to some common’s fenceless limits stray’d,  
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,  
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,  
And ev’n the bare-worn common is deny’d.”

GOLDSMITH;—DESERTED VILLAGE.

CHAP.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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### OBSERVATIONS ON THE CORN BOUNTY.

THE bounty upon the exportation of corn is a bad policy. It originated with those great landed proprietors who acted in the legislative capacity; who being eager to let their farms at a high price, found it necessary to keep corn at a high price also, that the tenant might be able to pay the rental. But to the community at large the corn bounty is injurious.

'Though, in the present state of cultivation, we cannot, upon a yearly average, grow corn enough for our own consumption, yet, under proper agricultural regulations, we might generally  
grow

grow a sufficiency for ourselves, and probably a tolerable surplus for exportation. But the principle of the present corn bounty is, to give a stimulus towards the production of more corn than is necessarily required, and thus to take off the attention from more important articles of agriculture.

Now, supposing, for the sake of argument, we were every year to grow much more corn than is necessary for our own use—what would be the consequence? Why, it would be sent away to foreign markets, and we should bring home, in return, some unnecessary foreign luxuries.

I do not mean, by what I here advance, to condemn the exportation of corn, when we have it really to spare; on the contrary, I am a friend to such a proceeding; for this species of traffic often opens a source of true philanthropy, in humanely relieving the wants of other nations. But I censure the measure of sacrificing other important objects of farming, for the purpose of growing corn, merely with a view of sending it abroad to purchase luxuries, whilst at home the price of animal food,  
and

and even bread itself, is such, that our own poor are doomed to a miserable subsistence.

If, therefore, by judicious management, we could grow corn enough for our own supply, would it not be much better to convert what land we might have to spare to the purpose of rearing cattle? Would it not be much better to turn some attention towards increasing our produce of milk, butter, cheese, &c. &c. ? Would not this, I say, be better than sacrificing all to the growth of more corn than we really want, (provided we could accomplish this object) for no other purpose than exchanging it for luxuries?

Besides, the corn bounty often occasions such a large exportation, as to leave scarcely any old corn in reserve. Therefore, should the succeeding crops prove deficient, a scarcity must ensue; unless we can purchase corn of foreign nations, and even then the price at home will, in general, be very high.

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## CHAPTER V.

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### ENQUIRY RESPECTING WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE CONDITION OF THE LABOURING CLASSES.

**A**GRICULTURE is carried on by the industry of the multitude. Therefore, in those countries where agriculture has been established, the multitude should participate in its beneficent effects. The advantages which it is calculated to shed, both upon the corporeal and mental powers, should be, in some measure, universally experienced, and not be solely appropriated to the interests of a few. Therefore, to illustrate fully the consequences of landed accumulation in this country, it will be necessary to investigate the general situation of the labouring mass.

The



The indispenfible utility of the labouring claffes must be univerfally ackdowledged, and the advancement of their prosperity is a meafure of the higheft national confequence. For, as an ingenious writer obferves—"The interefts of the poorer claffes of fociety are fo interwoven with thofe of every part of the community, that there is no fubject more deferving of general attention, nor any knowledge more entitled to the exalted name of fcience, than that in which their well-being is concerned; than that, the tendency of which is to carry domeftic comfort into the receffes of every cottage, and to add to the virtue and morality of a nation, by increafing its happinefs." See Mr. T. Bernard's *Preface to the First Report of the Society for bettering the Condition and increafing the Comforts of the Poor*.

The importance of the labouring orders, and the neceffity of their welfare being admitted, I proceed to confider what OUGHT TO BE their condition?

Certainly nature requires, and humanity demands, that thofe who endure the greateft fatigues of cor-

poreal labour, by whose toil the whole community is supported, should have habitations decent, secure, and comfortable; a sufficiency of food of the best quality, and the means of procuring independently for themselves every requisite accommodation. Nor should they be constrained to toil unintermittingly; but should have their intervals of leisure and relaxation, and an opportunity for acquiring mental improvement, which would greatly exalt them in the sphere of existence; to which must be added, that, after many years spent in useful industry, they should be enabled to emancipate themselves from servile dependance, and to advance themselves, in return for their important services, to a situation more lenient and agreeable. All this is not only of the highest importance to the labourer, but it is his inalienable right; and this right, did justice, gratitude, or philanthropy, direct our conduct, we should spontaneously acknowledge. For it cannot be denied, that the poor, are endued with the same passions, the same appetites, and the same propensities, as other men. They have therefore the same right to gratify their natural inclinations; and to withhold this right is tyranny and oppression.

The

The productions of the earth were designed for all; and 'though they must ever be distributed in various proportions, yet all ought to enjoy a sufficiency.

The man who rolls in ease and affluence will certainly confess, that his comforts are administered by the exertions of the labourer. If then, he who lives in useless idleness is surrounded by every luxury, surely the individual from whose labour he derives his profusion, ought at least to experience the blessings of plenty. The difference between the labourer and the man of wealth arises merely from the operation of fortuitous events. Why then is the labourer to be oppressed and slighted? Could he have had his choice, he would not have been poor. His situation should therefore be pitied as a misfortune, rather than censured as a fault. For it is the height of injustice to ill-treat any one for that which he would by every means have avoided had it been in his power.

I have taken up this subject upon the maxim, that the object of society should be to promote, as much as possible, the happiness of every individual;

dual ; and that those whom the casualty of circumstances has exalted, ought not to employ their property towards oppressing their less fortunate neighbours.

In the unremitting vicissitude of things, no one can ensure to himself the continuance of prosperity. The affluent of to day, may become the victim of penury to-morrow. And he who, placed in an exalted sphere, disregards the unhappiness of those below him, may, in the progress of events, be reduced to the same situation. Then would he feel the necessity of that social liberality, and that natural right, which before he might have positively objected to, or upon which he had not thought it worth while to reflect.

This consideration will demonstrate, that it is the interest, as well as the duty, of every man, in whatever degree of society he may be classed, to respect and vindicate the rights of others.

The support, the independence, the dignity of the nation, rely upon the exertions of the industrious

dustrious multitude. To them we must be indebted for our domestic prosperity, and for our defence against external danger. Consequently their welfare is one of the most important subjects which can possibly interest the consideration of the statesman. Would we have the nation secure, we must give the poor some share in its interest. It is only purse-proud insignificance that regards the poor with an eye of contempt; but when empty pride shall be superseded by reason, they will be regarded as the bulwark of the nation—the real pillars of the state; and without them all our prosperity would wither, our splendid dignity and consequence would speedily be annihilated, and remembered only in the silent records of the historic page. Let us then reflect upon their importance, and learn to value them as we ought; for, if they are lost, no means can be substituted as a compensation.

“Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade:

A breath can make them, as a breath has made:

But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,

When once destroy'd, can never be supply'd.”

GOLDSMITH;—DESERTED VILLAGE.



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## CHAPTER VI.

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### ON THE REAL CONDITION OF THE LABOURING CLASSES.

EVERY liberal reflection demonstrating what the condition of the labouring classes OUGHT TO BE, let us now turn to the melancholy contrast, and reflect upon what it is.

But here philanthropy must recede with indignation, and gratitude be veiled with conscious blushes; since nothing can be more repugnant to the generous mind, or more disgraceful to civilization, than the wretched condition of those industrious men, who make our fields and vallies smile with copious fertility, and our cities exult in rich abundance. For they are the worst fed, the worst clothed, and, in every respect, the worst

worst treated, of any class in society. Landed accumulation, and other ruinous systems, have involved them in the most penurious wretchedness. Domestic comfort is forbid them. Their situation discourages marriage. To them a family is the greatest calamity. They must consign themselves to the most unintermitting exertions—they must submit to the greatest extremities of want and self-denial—in order to give a bare support to their unfortunate offspring; but as to rendering them any kind of mental information, it is utterly impossible. Thus the great, the useful mass of the people, are excluded from the ennobling lights which knowledge sheds upon the human understanding. They are compelled to go on from stage to stage, from generation to generation, continually sinking in ignorance, and verging towards barbarism. They are bound over to perpetual calamity. Their faculties are benumbed. Stupor succeeds to immoderate labour, and chains down the mind's elastic energy. Their thoughts become nothing more than a kind of natural instinct, resembling that of irrational animals. Such a state of society is a destructive whirlpool, which  
 buries

buries talents in endless oblivion. It obliterates the nobler sentiments of the mind—and sacrifices, at the shrine of oppression, the blooming jocund smile of gaiety, the beam of hope, and the value of life.

Yet further it must be lamented, that the very institutions which depress and afflict the poorer classes, corrupt and deprave the minds and principles of the higher orders; who adopt a carriage reserved and haughty, and a disposition overbearing, contemptuous, and unfociable; who also scornfully disregard the miseries of those, to whose toil they are indebted for their triumphant exaltation.

Amidst all our pretensions to refinement and benevolence, yet, in many instances, reason shudders, and humanity revolts, at the calamities to which the poorer classes are exposed. These much injured people, bred up in misery, and without moral instruction, are liable to fall into the extreme of vice and depravity, which frequently brings them to an untimely end; and hence we find in

our

our courts justice, that nearly all those who are the objects of legal condemnation, are of the poorer classes. Society, too often, by rendering men wretched, first gives the stimulus to guilt, and then enforces rigid laws for the punishment of that guilt which its own injustice has occasioned.

—Whilst, therefore, the poor are kept in ignorance, and exposed to every species of oppression and misery, it is no wonder that they should lose all regard for their country's welfare; it is no wonder that, when they break loose into wild disorder, they should perpetrate enormous excesses. Society may chiefly blame itself for those convulsions which frequently shake it to its centre.

Another great stain upon the character of this country, is its inhuman treatment of the aged poor. The venerable labourer, after being quite exhausted by the united pressure of years and infirmity, ought, in remembrance of his past services, to be preserved and cherished by the hand of tenderness. But, instead of this, he is relentlessly dragged to a workhouse, and immured in the dreary receptacle of woe. There he is left to languish in  
mournful

mournful despondency, the victim of disease, want, and every wretchedness; breathing his plaintive sighs to the solitary walls of his disgraceful prison, unheard, unpitied, and unknown. In vain he wishes for the friendly hand, to administer some cordial relief to his affliction—the friendly hand cannot be found. No heart vibrates with sympathy for his sufferings; no hope is left to mitigate his sorrows; and, to render his situation still more insupportable, he must be a slave to the arbitrary caprice, or churlish disposition, of the petty despot, who, with all the disgusting authority of narrow-minded self-importance, superintends the gloomy mansion of his wretched degradation. Thus he mourns dejected and forlorn—without freedom, without health, without comfort, and without a friend. Under these circumstances, life becomes disgusting, and the prospect of death is his only consolation. This—this is the ungrateful—the inhospitable reward, which *polished society* gives to its benefactors!!!

Ye vain and idle luxurious, who amidst your shallow pomposity and high-swollen self-importance,  
 regard



regard the poor with an eye of contempt, as beings almost inferior to yourselves, turn a while to serious reflection, contemplate the miseries of those who support you, and learn pity for your fellow-creatures. But if your minds are obdurate to reflection, or if you insult misfortune, and suppress every sentiment of emotion for the unhappy, by selfishly exclaiming—"we live merrily and therefore all is right"—yet condescend for a while to *share* in the fatigues and the hardships of those whom ye condemn, and learn sympathy from woe-ful experience—

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—"Take physic, Pomp;  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel."

SHAKESPEARE;—KING LEAR.

I cannot conceive, for my own part, what great comforts and advantages have resulted to the poor from the establishment of our present houses of industry, and other similar subscription institutions—which are, in reality, no other than receptacles of slavish wretchedness, however they may be disguised and set off by more soft and polished phrases. Such places indeed may be called *charitable institutions, excellent benefices, and admirable seminaries*—  
for

for high-sounding names may easily be found to embellish any thing. But how do the poor themselves regard these *wonderful* specimens of benevolence? Why, they will suffer the greatest extremities, rather than become inhabitants of these so-much-commended retreats. And many would prefer to see their children carried to their graves, sooner than send them to these places of charitable imprisonment.

Most assuredly the honest, the generous, and the virtuous labourer, who has employed the flower of his years in the service of the public, must experience the most heart-breaking sensations, when, in his latter days, he is compelled to leave his beloved paternal cottage, and the company of those who are dear to him, to be imprisoned, without hope of releasement, amongst a society of melancholy invalids, wretched outcasts, profligate vagabonds, and abandoned prostitutes. What an agonizing situation for a person of a tranquil disposition and moral principles—to be shut up for life in such a repository of decrepitude, vagrancy, dissipation, and lewdness! And why, let us ask, is  
he

he thus imprisoned? The answer is—*for the crime of poverty*. For this his generous pride is wounded—his independence sacrificed—and his heart broken! 'tis in vain that we commend and congratulate ourselves upon our charity, whilst the objects of it are disgusted and miserable.

That dislike which the poor manifest for work-houses, and their uneasiness whilst confined in them, may be called, by unfeeling pride, the effects of ingratitude. But the case is far otherwise. They are the effects of the most natural principles—a love of freedom, and the instinctive horror which ever results from the gloomy idea of perpetual restraint. A pauper in a workhouse, and an invalid in a hospital, are the miserable slaves of mistaken benevolence. They are blotted out from society. Theirs is a state of inactivity and torpor; a mere vegetative, “neutral existence.”

There may, perhaps, always be found some persons who require public support; such as those who, in old age, have not a sufficiency to support themselves—orphans who are left destitute of the  
means

means of subsistence—and those whom accident, or premature infirmity, may hinder from procuring their own maintenance. These, however, ought not to be crowded into workhouses, and associated promiscuously with the vicious and abandoned; but ought to have an allowance from government to maintain them comfortably, either in proper seminaries or out. This allowance not to be considered as a charity, but as a *right* which the orphans have to protection, and the once-servicable to assistance, when they can no longer support themselves. That this right is the orphan's, humanity proclaims; and justice asserts it in behalf of the labourer—because he has an undoubted right to that assistance and support, of which his own industry has furnished the means.

As to those persons whom incorrigible depravity has brought to distress, proper receptacles might be purposely set apart for them.

Upon a general view of the subject, I cannot forbear thinking, that most societies and establishments, which have hitherto been gratuitously instituted

stituted by subscription for the relief of the poor, are drawbacks upon the law of nature and of right; since many of those persons who are the objects of these gratuitous institutions, are conceived to be obligated to others for that support, which, were it not for the oppressive injustice of society, they might procure for themselves;—besides, all such institutions, however modestly conducted, must ever carry with them the idea of public charity, with which idea that of ostentation is inseparably connected;—whereas, by making the distress of the really unfortunate a NATIONAL CONCERN, and granting them support as a *right*, instead of a *charity*, the appearance of ostentation would vanish.

Many of the institutors of public charities are, no doubt, men of benevolent minds, and I give them credit for their humane intentions. Several of their philanthropic sentiments I have read with admiration—but must regret that, with such minds, and with such sentiments, they should have stopped at the point of subscription benevolence. Give but every man his rights, and we shall find but few dependants in the circle of donative relief.

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I have often heard it asserted—that the poor are well off, and that they are the happiest of all classes in society.—In reply to this assertion, I ask—why then is poverty so much dreaded? Does not the desire of riches arise from a view of being enabled to keep off those evils to which poverty is exposed? If those who live in wealth really think poverty such a state of superior felicity, then they stand self-convicted of folly and inconsistency—since, by remaining attached to riches, they avoid the easy road to happiness, which certainly is the end aimed at by every human being.—It is said, however, that, to those who have been bred up in affluence, poverty would undoubtedly be a grievous oppression, because they have never been accustomed to the hardships which attend upon it;—but that those who have been inured to it, become, from habitual custom, unmindful of its effects; and as it precludes them from those cares and anxieties which are the concomitants of riches, it is therefore, in that case, to be considered as a mean of happiness, rather than a source of calamity.—What then, I ask, is it no calamity for any one to be so far inured to hardship, as to become habitually

habitually torpid? Is it no calamity to become familiarized with wretchedness? Is it no calamity to be deprived of all the noble sensations, which, in a state less laborious and wretched, might be experienced? If all this is no calamity, but if, on the contrary, it is to be considered as tending to produce happiness, then is it rational to conclude, that beasts which labour, and “want discourse of reason,” are happier than Man.—But if habitual poverty is to be considered as a happiness—why does every man, who possesses a regard for the welfare of his children, continually endeavour to set them beyond the reach of poverty? Why does he not rather train them to toil and want, so necessary (as it would seem by the above argument) to obtain real happiness?

In every point of view, the assertion—that poverty is no calamity, must appear inhumanly ridiculous; nor will it be made use of by any except such as are too far gone in ignorant prejudice to discern aright, or too much warped by interest to investigate with candour.

It has been observed by different authors, that, were the labour which is necessary for a decent support of life, divided equally amongst the whole community, the portion of each individual would be so small, as to render it no more than a salutary exercise; and that ample leisure would be given to every one for intellectual improvement, and for all the varied pleasing pursuits which render life dignified and agreeable.

But without insisting upon this speculation, it is certain, that amongst the quantity of labourers now employed, much less toil would be required, were it not for the influence of overgrown luxury. The necessities of life, and even common luxuries, are easily obtained; but *immoderate* luxury creates unnecessary labour—wastes profusely the productions of the earth—and often makes scarcity preside where otherwise plenty would have existed. Or should, at any time, the produce arising from immoderate labour exceed the expenditure of immoderate profusion, this overplus is monopolized, and sent abroad in exchange for foreign articles of luxury, instead of  
being

being added to the small pittance of the labourer, to make his heart rejoice in a plenteous repast.

It is undoubtedly pleasing to behold in a country refined embellishments, and moderate luxury; and certainly these might be extended almost universally under just laws and regulations. But where injurious systems discourage industry by inordinate pressure, there splendor may appear in prodigal profusion, and partial luxury may revel in excessive redundancy—but, to support these, the aggregate body of the people will be borne down with oppression; and the country, whilst externally it appears to exult in prosperity, carries within it the seeds of approaching decline.

Goldsmith has well depicted the ill effects of immoderate partial luxury, in the following lines.

“————— Ye statesmen who survey  
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,  
'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand  
Between a splendid and a happy land.  
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,  
And shouting Folly hails them from her shore;

Hoard,

Hoards, e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,  
 And rich men flock from all the world around.  
 Yet count our gains: this wealth is but a name  
 That leaves our useful products still the same.  
 Not so the loss: the man of wealth and pride,  
 Takes up a space that many poor supplied;  
 Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,  
 Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;  
 The robe that wraps his limbs in filken sloth,  
 Has robb'd the neighb'ring fields of half their growth;  
 His seat, where solitary sports are seen,  
 Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;  
 Around the world each needful product flies,  
 For all the luxuries the world supplies.  
 While thus the land adorn'd for pleasure all  
 In barren splendor feebly waits the fall."

## DESERTED VILLAGE.

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"Thus fares the land, by luxury betray'd,  
 In nature's simplest charms at first array'd,  
 But verging to decline, its splendors rise,  
 Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise;  
 While, scourg'd by famine from the smiling land,  
 The mournful peasant leads his humble band;  
 And while he sinks, without one arm to save,  
 The country blooms—a garden and a grave."

IBID.

Taking



Taking the subject in a moral and religious view, the present situation of the poor appears still more unjustifiable,

That omnipotent Being, from whom all things derive their existence, created men with impartial benevolence, without individual favour or respect. Must it not, then, excite HIS displeasure, to see those whom he has thus created, and endued with the superior faculty of reason, perpetually oppressing each other, and totally destitute of all fraternal sympathy, as if they were not of a similar species? Thus perverting HIS benevolent designs, and acting, as it were, in defiance of HIS intention.

I am well aware, that many will censure me for divulging these sentiments; but such declarations are absolutely necessary; the condition of the poorer classes calls aloud for redress—nor can these useful people be relieved by individual exertions; but by the concentrated endeavours of the whole community. Every one, therefore, who feels for their distress, should publicly call upon others to adopt measures in concert.

Away with the pitiful—the unjust idea, that men should be kept ignorant of their rights that they may be kept peaceable; for the same principle which dictates this sentiment, would dictate every species of fraud and robbery, could they be perpetrated without detection. Such an idea may be entertained by those interested bigots who exult and fatten on the public spoil, but every unprejudiced honest man will disdain to admit it; since he must see, at one view, both its futility and its injustice. No; would we prevent violent commotions, let every man be instructed in his rights; and the same knowledge which teaches him his own rights, will teach him to respect the rights of others—since the reciprocal rights of men necessarily include their reciprocal duties. In short, if we treat the poor as they ought to be treated, we need not be apprehensive that they should understand their rights; and if we treat them unjustly, we are tyrants to keep them in slavish ignorance.

The narrow-minded and illiberal, the luxurious, and the inhuman, may deprecate the idea of advancing the poor; yet by men of reason, benevolence,

lence, and philosophic reflection, it will be found the most generous, the most grateful, and the most important science.

Count Rumford says—"To make wicked and abandoned people happy, it has generally been supposed necessary, *first* to make them virtuous. But why not reverse this order? Why not make them *happy* first, and then virtuous? If virtue and happiness be *inseparable*, the end will as certainly be obtained by the one method as the other; and it is undoubtedly much easier to contribute to the happiness and comfort of persons in a state of poverty and misery, than, by admonitions and punishments, to reform their morals." *Essays—Political, &c.*

Such is the opinion of Count Rumford with respect to those whom misery has rendered dissolute and abandoned; which opinion is founded in reason and true benevolence. For it is most absurd and illiberal to exclaim against the poor on account of their improper conduct and behaviour, whilst we withhold from them the conveniences of  
subsistence,

subsistence, and the means of mental information. Give human nature a fair chance for its conduct, and then separate, impartially, the good from the evil. Throughout all classes the well-meaning and industrious should always be encouraged; and should there be some so inflexibly vicious and depraved as to be proof against controul—whom no reason can persuade, nor no advantages reform—these, and these only, should experience the bitterness of penury.



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## CHAPTER VII.

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FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE EFFECTS OF  
LARGE FARMS; AND SOME THOUGHTS RE-  
SPECTING THE ADVANTAGES WHICH WOULD  
RESULT TO THE COUNTRY FROM THE ABOLI-  
TION OF LANDED MONOPOLY.

HAVING contrasted, in a general view, what  
OUGHT TO BE the condition of the multitude with  
what it really is, I now return to the subject of  
landed monopoly,

Perhaps some land may be found of so sterile a  
nature, that it will not answer the expence of cul-  
tivation, except it be occupied in large quantities.  
I mean not, in this instance, to contend against  
the expediency of large farms, provided their ex-  
tent



tent be within any tolerable compass; but I am  
 censuring that *immoderate* and *general* system of  
 landed accumulation, which swallows in its vortex  
 the happiness of millions.—That this general  
 landed monopoly is ultimately injurious to the ma-  
 jority of the farmers, I will most positively affirm;  
 —and in support of my assertion, I will appeal to  
 the testimony of the farmers themselves. Ask  
 him who has several sons brought up to agricul-  
 ture, whom he wishes to place in business upon  
 their own account, if that measure be not ren-  
 dered almost impracticable, from the great scarcity  
 of farms which this monopoly has occasioned?  
 And, if he will speak candidly, he will readily con-  
 fess it. Besides, as the leases expire, the compe-  
 tition for farms is so great, as to give the farmer  
 but a small prospect of obtaining another situation,  
 or of continuing in his old one, except at such an  
 advance of rent as must make the profits very in-  
 considerable. Indeed, farms are so scarce, and  
 the competitors for them so numerous, as to make  
 the letting of a farm somewhat resemble a sale by  
 auction; and we have frequent instances of twenty  
 or thirty solicitors for the refusal of an indifferent  
 farm,

farm, upon the first distant report of its being likely to be vacated.—Thus many farmers become entirely destitute of employment, and are obliged either to seek more hospitable shores, or, remaining at home, to engage in callings with which they are totally unacquainted, and which frequently prove their final overthrow.—'Tis also from the influence of landed monopoly that such immense numbers resort to large towns, overburthening every trade, and every mechanical profession. Hence in these places the poor-rate often becomes so enormous, as to involve the small tradesman in ruin by its pressure. From hence our gazettes are crowded with bankruptcies—from hence the frequency of emigrations.

By this unjust—this impolitic system, the laborious orders are deprived of every comfort, and of every hope. In contemplating their situation, whether past, present, or to come, nothing presents itself but the cheerless gloom of perpetual servitude, and the painful idea of hard-grinding penury. Thus, wanting many of the necessaries, and almost all the enjoyments of life, they are, in a  
great

great measure, robbed of their existence. Perhaps, during a long course of laborious servitude, some of them, by persevering economy, may have collected a small sum, in the pleasing expectation of renting a little land, and of raising themselves progressively to a more comfortable situation; when they behold, with the most poignant disappointment, a monopolizing system grasping every acre of territory, and counteracting all their alluring hopes; therefore they are glad to aim at any advantage which jobbing, contracting, or regrating may seem to promise; and some of them engage in these pursuits, with but little profit to themselves, though with much injury to the community at large;—whilst others of these unfortunate men, defeated in the hopes which they had formed, lose every thought of employing their property to advantage, and, in some irritated moment of hopeless frenzy, waste it in profligate excess. Thus the peasantry become dispirited and wretched—the victims to every suggestion of despair. The ill-treatment of society hardens their hearts, degrades their natures, and vitiates their manners. The labourer perceives himself oppressed,

fed, degraded, and slighted—thrown, as it were, into the back ground of society, and regarded only as a creature fit for drudgery. He feels indignant at this insulting, and unmerited treatment—rejects subordination—and adopts the most irreverent behaviour. He regards the large farmer who employs him, not with the cheerful smile of friendship, but with the fullen countenance of gloomy discontent; he considers him as one who, in part, monopolizes, and deprives him of, his natural right; consequently he loses all respect for the person of his employer, and all regard for his interest. The farmer notices this conduct in the labourer, and often erroneously attributes it to a natural depravity of disposition. Hence he becomes, in his turn, suspicious, impatient, and violent; endeavouring, by terror, to enforce that obedience, which, but for the influence of erroneous institutions, might be the effect of reason and gratitude. Thus between the large farmer and the labourer, mutual confidence and friendship are destroyed, and mutual distrust and disaffection appear.

Such

Such are the consequences, at present, in the agricultural department; nor can we expect less from a system which, to confer wealth and grandeur upon a few individuals, sacrifices the happiness of the aggregate mass.

Upon the whole, it appears, that, even admitting the product of the country to be increased by landed monopoly, yet this circumstance would not be sufficient to defend the measure, as it is at present conducted; because its mischievous consequences operate in an extensive sphere, whilst its benefits are confined to a partial distribution. For, notwithstanding all our vaunted prosperity, we find, even in the most prolific seasons, that the condition of the poor is seldom ameliorated. Whether plenty or scarcity prevails, they are destined to the same necessitous poverty, to the same scanty pittance, and to the same ill-sheltering hovel and wretched clothing. The bounty of the seasons extends not to them; 'tis not for their comfort that fertility visits our fields; the joys of plenty are withheld from their possession. The Sun darts forth his procreative beams—the plenty-distilling shower



flower falls down benignant—but unrelenting monopoly usurps the soil, and leaves the cottage a scene of dejection and woe.

Turning, for a moment, from subjects of serious importance, and adverting to prospects which interest the fancy, I shall just remark, that, by the prevalence of large farms, even the captivating scenery of the country is destroyed.—The convenience and taste of the large farmer correspond not with the circumscribed limits of inclosures; hence their picturesque boundaries are thrown down, and one wide campaign presents itself, bleak and uninteresting, dreary, barren, and uncomfortable.

Were this reprehensible practice abolished, the happy change would be almost instantaneously perceived. Industry would wear a more cheerful aspect, and poverty would smile in the prospect of advancement. The land which had long been impoverished and neglected, would soon display a copious produce; the hitherto much injured glebe would be rescued from approaching sterility, and

gratefully rejoice in luxuriant abundance. That extensive waste, the consequence of too slight an attention, would be no longer visible; and many lesser objects would be turned to advantage, which, though too trivial for the notice of large farmers, are attended to by the small ones without inconvenience. Hence would our markets be plentifully supplied with poultry, butter, eggs, and other similar conveniencies, which, since the abolition of small farms, have been so difficult and expensive to procure. Then the servant would no longer be obliged to consign himself to a state of celibacy, from the inability to support a wife and family; but having, by the wages of his diligence and economy, acquired a small farm, he might gradually raise himself to independence, and glide down the stream of life in conjugal felicity; whilst, reared in health and industry, around him might spring up a numerous progeny, the glory of their country—its most essential support in times of peace, in times of danger its best security.

Let the poor be no longer regarded as mere machines of drudgery, living solely for the convenience

venience of those to whom fortune has been more liberal in her favours. Give them some property in the soil, and they will interest themselves in the national welfare; they will feel the necessity of social order, and make their country's cause their own. Misery would then be less predominant. The poor-rate, that evidence of unrequited industry, would then be considerably done away. Finally, to the poor would be given relief and happiness, to the rich security and tranquil satisfaction.

Renovated by the happy change, society would assume a more cheerful aspect, a more elegant garb, a more refined embellishment—its proportions would be more natural, and more agreeable; we might then behold abundance and splendor on the one hand, without having our feelings so often depressed by viewing want and misery on the other.

Though many persons of wealth and character in this country have interested themselves in the cause of the poor, and fought to promote their benefit, yet they have generally confined them-

selves to partial remedies, and mere temporary expedients, without noticing the pernicious effects of landed monopoly. But whilst this grand source of evil remains, all other proposed measures for the welfare of the poor, will be only a sort of arbitrary compound—a pitiful return for their disfranchised rights. Oppression first robs them of all property in the soil—takes from them all chance of rising by industry—and then deals out, with haughty and disgusting authority, some paltry allowance, and ostentatiously terms it a *charitable gift*! Thus insulting monopoly makes a *merit* of recognising those miseries, which are derived from its own injustice! Such attempts as these to relieve the public distress, are but mockeries in pompous disguise. Ye, therefore, who really respect the happiness of the poorer classes, seek not to screen unjust and oppressive systems, by the flimsy veil of precarious charity.—Whilst arbitrary institutions continue to usurp the rights of mankind, and to involve the multitude in the gulph of wretchedness, it is in vain to attempt a palliation of this conduct, by private contributions, or public establishments; such measures serve only

only to delude, not to redress; to insult, and not to commiserate.

I shall content myself with having endeavoured to point out the injurious consequences of large farms, and shall leave others to determine the best means of redress. Several plans have already been mentioned with a view of removing the evil.—Some have thought that the remedy might be effected by a tax *per* acre upon farms containing more than a given number of acres—making some exceptions in particular cases. A plan has also been suggested of establishing a fund by subscription, in order to buy up large estates, with intent to divide them into small farms; \* which plan, it appears, has actually been attempted. †

I am not an advocate for having private property continually under the controul of governments; but particular circumstances may occur, with respect to private possession, wherein the interference of the  
 G 3 legislature

\* See Mr. Wright's "Short Address to the Public on the Monopoly of Small Farms."

† See the Reply to Mr. Wright's Address.



legislature may be absolutely necessary;—for instance, let us suppose, merely by way of illustration, that the landed proprietors of this country were unanimously determined that their lands should lay uncultivated—it would certainly then be the duty of government, as trustee for the people, to oppose this measure; since the adoption of it must create a general famine and desolation.—'Though the above is an extravagant supposition, yet it serves to prove, that governments have a right so far to interfere with private property, as to prevent its becoming an instrument of public oppression.

However, with respect to the present evil of landed accumulation, I think it would be far preferable for the land-owners themselves, by a voluntary effort, to apply the remedy; and, by dividing their farms, to promote the national interest and their own together; for, in smaller farms the land would be better cultivated and improved, which would render these estates more beneficial to the community at large, and of more value to the proprietors.

Upon

Upon an impartial view of the situation of this country, I am firmly persuaded, that, 'till some reform is made in the distribution of land, the multitude must be wretched; and whilst this wretchedness prevails, murmurings and disaffection will never cease,

To you then, ye landed proprietors, many of whose hearts glow with generous philanthropy, to you I address myself. Reflect seriously upon the consequences of this evil-dispensing system—and, as the leases expire, divide such of your farms as are of too great a magnitude for the public welfare. Furthermore, in order to give a permanent stability to the advantages which will result from your proceeding, unite with the friends of radical reform, and abrogate the sources of those evils which have long harrassed and afflicted the nation. So will you merit, and so will you obtain, the esteem and applauses of all reflecting and patriotic minds—for thus will you promote the national benefit, and restore to our dejected villages the placid smile of rural harmony.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ON UNIVERSAL EDUCATION.

SINCE I have mentioned, in some of the foregoing pages, that the poor ought to have an opportunity of acquiring intellectual improvement, I will now offer some remarks upon general instruction—as this is a consideration which seems somewhat connected with the preceding subject, though it could not be conveniently introduced in the order of the work.

Universal

Universal Education is a question of the highest importance. But many persons have objected to this essential measure, under pretence that mental information would render the poorer classes insolent and ungovernable. Surely such a doctrine is, in the highest degree, illiberal and inconsistent. For education tends to civilize, not to deprave the mind. It is the preserver of order and moderation, not the creator of headlong violence. Let me ask those who profess the contrary opinion—whether the commotions of ignorant multitudes are not always more fatal in their consequences, than those of enlightened men, whose passions are moderated and humanized by the influence of education?—Certainly the slightest acquaintance with human nature, or a momentary appeal to historical facts, will sufficiently demonstrate, that ignorance is the stagnant pool, where mischief, in endless variety, is perpetually generated.

I know it is urged by many—that universal education seems not to have been the intention of Providence; because, they assert, that in a society of enlightened men, no one would submit to those laborious

laborious employments, which are so indispensibly requisite to human existence and comfort.—

Now to me it appears, that universal instruction *was evidently* the design of Providence; because it endued men, *in general*, with faculties capable of vast extension; and certainly these faculties were not bestowed upon any one with an intent that they should lay dormant and neglected, but, on the contrary, that they should aid and dignify the nature of man, by being called into vigorous exertion. Upon what authority, then, can the enlightened few assert the privilege of keeping knowledge exclusively to themselves, when they may behold that Providence, by its impartial dispensations, has evidently manifested a contrary intention? —As to the opinion, that were all men enlightened, none would labour, it is an hypothesis founded in the grossest error. For, to suppose that a well-informed society would neglect the means of support, would be to suppose, that, in proportion as men increased in wisdom, their conduct became more irrational and absurd.

To



To behold mankind conciliated in friendship and happiness, is a consummation devoutly to be wished. But how is this object likely to be accomplished, except by a general diffusion of knowledge? Nor is a long course of scholastic discipline necessary to acquire an extensive degree of intellectual improvement; the best school education being insufficient of itself to constitute a man of real learning. The instruction received at school is no more than a *foundation* of knowledge, whereon would we raise a resplendent and durable fabric, it must be by the industry of our riper years.

Literature is a source of intellectual pleasure, and a grand promoter of the good of mankind—nor would there be any one in a well-ordered community—nor perhaps is there scarcely any one at present—who might not find some time to employ upon such an important object.

The devotees of ignorance, triumphing in their stupidity, may sarcastically deride the pursuit of knowledge, as degrading to *a man of spirit*; but  
every

every reflecting person will regard, with merited contempt, such paltry and irrational insinuations.

The pursuit of every human being is happiness; and the source of happiness is knowledge. For knowledge is the only barrier between human, and mere animal existence. It is this which exalts man above the brute, and gives him a superior rank in creation. In proportion, therefore, as man is supposed to be happier than the brute, so is knowledge to be estimated beyond the gloom of ignorance.

Knowledge, then, being the source of individual happiness, must be essential to the happiness of society.

There may, perhaps, always be found some persons, who, notwithstanding they possess enlightened minds, will be vicious in their inclinations, and pervert the benignant purposes of knowledge. Such, in their pursuit of happiness, (for happiness is the pursuit of every individual, whether virtuous or otherwise) will search for it in  
a course

a course of depravity, and refuse to pursue it through the paths of virtue, which knowledge, rightly attended to, points out as the surest road.— But an enlightened majority would always incline to the side of virtue, however individuals might swerve from its dictates.

From a nation of well-informed men nothing dangerous need be apprehended. They would attempt nothing but what was sanctioned by the principles of moral rectitude; and in all their operations to accomplish their object, to this principle they would always adhere. 'Tis the narrow-minded policy of keeping the multitude ignorant, which often creates so much havoc in society; because, whilst ignorance envelopes the majority of a nation, then, in every national understanding, there will be danger of violating moral principles; for ignorance is the parent of mischief.

From these considerations we may conclude, that the friends of peace, of justice, of liberty, and of virtue, should be zealous advocates for the general diffusion of knowledge. Let

Let men associate together as brethren, not as enemies. Let them abandon every principle of oppression, and vie with each other in acts of reciprocal benevolence. Thus let them cultivate universal friendship, and let this be called THE AGE OF HUMANITY!

*Thomas Marsters, Junior.*

*Bawsey; April, 1798.*



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